



SINI 4 Spotlight

Volume 3 Number 2

October 2012

Happy Halloween, everyone! A couple of hard frosts here on the seacoast means we are counting down the days to finish up garden cleanup before real weather arrives. On the plus side, the sight of the deep red oak and bright gold beech leaves seen through the mist rising off the rivers and reservoirs never ceases to take my breath away!

In this issue, I'll explain a message you'll receive soon from the *Steps* system regarding "coaching comments." Also, as I've been responding to your questions about the process and system by phone and email, I thought everyone might find the responses helpful so I've included "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)" here and will post on the *Steps to Success* web page. One topic that came up recently was how student outcome data factors in to the assessment of the indicators. Check out the article in this issue for questions to ask to rate the influence of the "input" indicators on student learning. I included a few updates on some hot topics in NH – the "waiver" and Networks. Finally, I am trying to update my contacts and I need you to review the list at the end of the newsletter and let me know if changes are needed. *Enjoy!*



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New Hampshire
Department of
Education


Steps to Success

Welcome to Indistar.org!

Many of you might recall that *Steps to Success* was developed by the national Center on Innovation and Improvement under the generic name **Indistar**. As of September 2012, the federal contract for the Center on Innovation and Improvement has expired, so the developers of **Indistar** (ADI – the Academic Development Institute) have created a new website for Indistar users. You can log in to *Steps to Success* using the Indistar login link on the right hand side of the Indistar.org web page. You can still enter your *Steps to Success* workspace from the centerii.org web page which will stay active for some time to come, but new resources and information for users will be posted on the Indistar.org homepage.

Another change you experienced concurrent with the transition to a new website is the new “look” of your *Steps to Success* School Main Menu page. Once you log in, click on the Support for School Improvement “Steps to Success” School Indicators to arrive at the Main Menu page.

Changes from the images you saw at our May 2012 orientation include:

Before	Now
Step 1 -- Edit School Information	grey band near top of page
Step 3 – School Team	Colorful people icon to the right 
Step 4 -- Assess Indicators	ASSESS box in center
Step 5 – Create School Plan	CREATE box in center
Step 6 – Monitor School Plan	MONITOR box in center

The functions of Steps 4, 5 and 6 remain the same as before; it’s only the appearance that is changed. Remember to SKIP Demographics and Assessment now shown as icons on the right side of the Main Menu page. The information requested in these sections is already captured in your NH School Report Card and is not linked to other sections within the Steps tool.

Coaching Comments

When you log onto *Steps to Success*, on the School Main Menu you’ll see two boxes on the lower right: Consultant to the School and District Liaison. The system assigns me as your “consultant” unless you indicated that you hired another coach or facilitator to help with your work. (If the District Liaison box is empty, please let me know who you would like to serve in that role. Refer to the Logins document you received with your passwords to know what the District Liaison password allows.)

In the *Steps* (Indistar®) system, the role of coach (consultant) has special responsibilities. As described in the book, *Coaching for School Improvement: A Guide for Coaches and their*

Supervisors (www.centerii.org), the coach's primary function is to provide "pressures and supports" to help the team throughout its engagement in a continuous improvement process, such as *Steps to Success*.

In addition to providing 'pressures and supports' in a face to face situation, the *Steps to Success* system allows the coach to view the work posted by the team and to provide feedback remotely to help the team make best use of the process.

Over the next couple of weeks, the principal and process manager will receive an email from ADI saying that you've received a coaching comment and providing a link to the page where the comment is posted. I will be doing a first review of your work with *Steps to Success* with a primary focus on the descriptions you posted of current level of implementation. I'll offer some feedback – clarifying questions, suggestions for making your evidence more robust and persuasive – as a 'coaching comment.'

I'll be paying particular attention to the evidence you provide to support your claim that a particular practice is "fully implemented." Remember: you will likely find *many* practices that you feel are fully implemented at your school, but this process asks you to corroborate your 'feelings' with evidence.



There is *no requirement* that you act on the feedback offered in the coaching comment. You can *choose* to reply to a coaching comment within the system, or by email or phone if you wish, but you are not required to do so. You can choose to revisit or revise your work if you wish to make it more explicit or persuasive, but do only what you find helpful *for your own benefit!*

If you have hired a consultant recently and would like them to have coaching privileges, please send me their contact information (Name, email, phone, school) and I'll arrange to get the proper logins assigned. (Karenlaba@comcast.net; karen.laba@doe.nh.gov)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Over the course of the past four years working with the almost 110 schools using *Steps to Success*, I've received a variety of inquiries asking for advice about how to conduct the work. Here are the answers to a few of the questions you might find helpful. Some of the questions were published in the October 2011 issue of *Spotlight* but are worth repeating with updated links.

Q1: *How can I (or my Superintendent or School Board) find out about the Steps process?*

A1: *Each year we hold an orientation in May for new schools in restructuring (SINI4). At that meeting we reviewed the requirements for restructuring and provided a brief orientation to*

the Steps to Success tool. The presentation for that meeting is posted on the Department website at <http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/stepstosuccess.htm>. All of the resources on the Steps to Success page of the NH DOE website are available for use by schools to inform interested stakeholders in their community about the tool and the Steps to Success process to identify critical practices to be strengthened or adopted in order to improve student achievement.

You can find a number of overviews and orientations to the Indistar tool at Indistar.org. It is important to be aware that the process and products for NH schools differs from the general guidelines described in some of the Indistar guidance. Over 25 states use Indistar, and each has customized it to suit their own practices and requirements.

Q2: We're thinking about using Survey Monkey to gather input from all the teachers on all the indicators. Will that work?

A2: If the purpose of the assessment process were to gather input on yes/no or checklist type questions, then Survey Monkey would work. However, the assessment requires a few steps that can't be accomplished without face to face conversation. The first step in assessing your current practices is to agree on what the terms in the indicator mean. In a survey, respondents may consider the "leadership team" to be administrators only, another respondent may think about the school's data team functions as the "leadership team" as the term is used in the Wise Ways.

The second step in the process is to read the Wise Ways to learn what research says the "best practice" looks like. Asking all teachers to read every Wise Ways before responding to the survey would seem like a big demand. Further, how many times have we read the same information as a colleague yet come to different conclusions about the point of the article?

The survey might be a useful strategy to decide which indicators to assess first, or which to assign to teacher groups and which to ask administrators to assess, but the essence of the process is the professional conversation – and professional learning – that emerges from candid face to face assessment of the school's current practices.

Q3: Aaarrgggghhhh! The computer keeps messing up and we can't get our work done! Help!

A3: As with all electronic systems, sometimes the servers at ADI 'break.' You've probably seen the yellow screen Runtime Error message from time to time. (See below for suggestions for dealing with this error.)



BUT no computer error should stall your work!!! The improvement planning process we've defined as Steps to Success doesn't rely on the computer. As noted in the response above, the process is all about professional conversations among colleagues examining closely their current practices and identifying gaps and strengths.



Common Technical “glitches” and some fixes for Steps to Success

Blocked “pop-ups” --If you click, re-click, and click again, and a report or document doesn't appear, check for messages from your browser saying “Pop-ups blocked” and follow the instructions for un-blocking pop-ups.

Try these strategies before calling for help when you have technical issues:

1. Log out and then back in.
2. If using Firefox as your browser, log out and try using Explorer. (If using Explorer and it's not working, log off and try Firefox.)
3. If EXPORT as WORD (last option in the dropdown) is trouble, choose PDF export format (often comes out nicer but doesn't let you modify).
4. Restart your computer.
5. Try another computer.
6. Try entering Steps to Success with NHSAMPLE logins instead of your school password.

Q4: Our school is in restructuring because of math. Can we just examine the indicators related to math?

A4: You'll soon notice that the indicators are all about best practices, which apply to every subject area. When you rate the level of implementation of each indicator, ask yourselves whether the practice is evident in all classrooms (including resource rooms!) Sometimes, you will notice that there are differences between the way things work in math lessons versus reading lessons. The differences in strengths and gaps you notice between subject areas, grade levels, and service areas (e.g., SWD) will figure into your PLAN after you've looked at priorities.

There's an example in the "Mt Adams" entries you can see by logging in to [nhsample/nhsample](#) and looking at indicator IIA02. Share the examples (Mt. Adams info for IIA02, IB04 and IIC05) with your staff if you think it helpful.

Q5: The state has submitted a request to the US Department of Education for a “waiver” from ESEA (Title I) accountability consequences. How will this affect our requirement to complete a “restructuring plan.”

A5: GREAT question! And one that has no clear answer at this point. According to the most recent statements from Deputy Commissioner Paul Leather, no change in accountability practices will take place before spring 2013. The waiver has been submitted and the NH DOE is in conversations with USED about its contents.

Let me repeat the advice I've given many of you directly: take from the Steps to Success process those components that yield the greatest benefits for you and your staff and students. I'll stay informed and pass along any information I learn that will have an impact on the 'deliverables' you're expected to produce.



Rating “priority” -- linking indicators to outcomes

When you are asked to rate the **priority** of an indicator, remember to assess not the *value* of a practice but rather its *degree of impact* on student learning. After all, each of the practices described in the indicators are valuable practices – there is evidence showing that they make a difference in many classrooms and schools. What matters to you is how much of an influence the practice will have on the learning of your particular students – if fully and effectively implemented.

Here are some questions to ask as you try to sift through the many, many good practices to determine those that are high priority because they have a significant influence on student learning:

(from Practice Assessing an Indicator protocol)

What is the **priority** of this practice for your school’s improvement?

- a. How much would this practice – if fully and effectively implemented -- contribute to improved student achievement? Choose a High Priority rating if its implementation offers substantial promise of improved student learning, more effective teacher practice, and/or more efficient organizational operations.
 - *What does your student outcome data say are the groups of students who are struggling the most to meet rigorous academic targets?
 - *What does your student outcome data say are the specific areas of weakness your students demonstrate? (i.e., reading comprehension; computational fluency; etc.)
 - *Is the practice described in this indicator one that is known to have a strong influence on this area of weakness? (Refer to the instructional practice guides for your school’s curriculum.)
- b. Is this practice something you’ve been striving for already? If so, give it a High priority rating.
 - *Do your professional learning communities have clear purposes and deliverables?
 - *Are professional learning activities linked to indicators of effective teaching? (many NH schools are adopting the Danielson or Marzano indicators of effective teaching; are you considering taking that step?)
- c. Does this practice complement existing reform initiatives in your school or district? If so, rate it a High priority.
 - *Are you implementing a response to instruction (intervention) approach? Rate highly those indicators related to RtI practices – adjusting core instruction in response to student data; providing enrichment or remediation based on student data

Thinking about “inputs” and “outcomes” and identifying the link between the *Steps to Success* indicators and student performance can help schools make the best choices for their



improvement efforts. Don't leave student data in the file cabinet. Bring it in to the conversation about the indicators to help answer the "now what?" question – we know our students are weak in these areas, but now what do we do to change those results?

SINI Plans and SINI Grants

As you know, I've been asked to review your 2012-2013 SINI plan and approve your request for use of the \$10,000 SINI grant. I'm making my way through all the plans and budget requests, but the process is slow. Please be patient. If you've submitted a plan or budget request and haven't heard back within 30 days, please send me an email.

NH Network Design for State System of Support

As part of the ESEA waiver request, the NH DOE proposed a design for state support of schools that includes a regional liaison structure and a series of networks within three strands – technical assistance, knowledge, and innovation. You can read about the Networks by clicking the link on the left column of the home page of the NH DOE website.



The Regional Liaisons have been meeting with Superintendents and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment representatives in their assigned regions around the state to describe the Network design and develop plans for support of schools and districts. Many of you will be familiar with the liaisons:

Lakes Region	Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu	jbergo@seresc.net
South Central Region	Randy Bell	bellp@comcast.net
North Country	Randy Bell	bellp@comcast.net
Southeastern Region	Bob Manseau	bobmanseau@comcast.net
Southwestern Region	Saundra Kent	kentss@gsinet.net

Both the Networks and the Regional Liaison framework are in development. Watch for additional information as the year moves along.

I hope you find this newsletter helpful. Please contact me if you have suggestions for items to include in a future issue or recommendations for improvement. BE SURE to distribute this to your team members and others who might find this information useful. Thanks!

Dr. Karen Laba, NH Consultant for School Improvement

karen.laba@doe.nh.gov; (c) 603 969-0988; (h) 603 743-5129 karenlaba@comcast.net

2012 SINI 4 Cohort Contacts

Please review the information on the following list and let me know of additions or corrections.

2012 SINI 4 (Restructuring Planning Year) -- Contacts

School	Principal	Process Mgr	District Liaison	Consultant
Allenstown ES	Lynn Allen		Kasey Landry-Filion	
Bakie ES	Deborah Bamforth	Marianne Klemarczyk	Ellen Hume-Howard	
Barnstead ES	Timothy Rice	Linda Nelson -	John Fauci	
Barrington ES	Mary Maxfield		Gail Kushner	Pam Clark
Bartlett ES	David Bousquet		MaryClaire Barry	
Belmont MS	Aaron Pope			
Bethlehem ES	Shelli Roberts	Annalisa Blake	Paul Williams	
Bristol ES	Dana Andrews	Elisa MacDonald -		
Broken Ground ES	Susan Lauze		Donna Palley	
Center Woods ES	Jess Potter		Pam Shepard	
Charlestown Prim S	Lynn Carey	Lori Landry	Lorraine Landry	
Concord Senior HS	Eugene Connolly			
Derry Village ES	Steve Miller		Christopher McCallum	
Dr. H.O. Smith ES	Scott Baker	Melanie Curren	Diane Hampoian	
Hills Garrison ES	Marilyn Martellini	Mary Levesque	Mary Ellen Ormond	
John Stark Regional HS	Christopher Mosca			
Maple Avenue ES	Dan Cherry	Brynn Kane	Cory LeClair	
Matthew Thornton ES	Carol Mack	Carol Mack	Andy Corey	
Milton ES	Polly Golden	Jocelyn Young		
North Londonderry ES	Mary Coltin		Mary K. Coltin	
Nottingham ES	Michelle Carvalho	Maryclare Heffernan	Anne Kebler	
Pelham ES	Thomas Adamakos	Mrs. Michelle Viger	Amanda Lecaroz	
Rollinsford Grade Schl	Kate Lucas	Lindsey Kaichen		
South Londonderry ES	Linda Boyd			
Southwick School	Richard Hines	Karen Dow	Suzan Gannett	
William Allen School	Christopher Foley	Andrea Learnard	Mary Moriarty	
Woodland Heights ES	Dennis Dobe	Joanna Bergman	Terri Forsten	

